Predictors of Morale in U.S. Peacekeepers[1]

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In this prospective study, we examined pre- and postmission predictors of morale in U.S. military peacekeepers deployed to Kosovo. After controlling for demographic and military characteristics, current general life stressors, unit cohesion, and reports of patriotism and nationalism were predictive of predeployment morale. We also found that positive military experiences, general overseas military stressors, and postdeployment unit cohesion were significant predictors of postdeployment morale after controlling for demographic and military characteristics and predeployment morale, cohesion, and patriotism/nationalism. The results suggest the need to broaden our understanding of the factors that may assist and motivate soldiers during demanding peacekeeping operations and the factors that may mitigate the impact of stressful demands and associated mission-related strain.

The military is a culture in which individuals belong to many groups of varying sizes. As group size decreases, members become more important to one another, and cohesion and morale within the group become more critical. Arguably, a soldier's squad is one of the smallest group formations within the military and is also the core of a soldier's support system and social network. It is impossible for the military to function, particularly during highly stressful and demanding missions, without support, trust, unity, and esprit de corps within these smaller networks. The unity that binds a group together, and the expectation that the group will provide for individual members in need despite stressors, is generally referred to as *cohesion. Morale* is the degree of enthusiasm and drive that results from group cohesion and a variety of organizational variables. It can coalesce into a collective motivational state resulting in dedication to a common goal, a shared sense of purpose and identity, and confidence in a shared future.

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Cohesion has also been defined as a sense of belonging to a particular group, with feelings of morale associated with group membership (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990). Manning (1991) argues that military unit cohesion is an important contributor to morale, rather than a synonymous process variable. Cohesion and morale have been found to be associated with combat effectiveness, job performance, overall well-being, and satisfaction (e.g., Belenky, 1987; Griffith, 1997, 2002; Oliver, Harman, Hoover, Hayes, & Pandhi, 1999).

We argue that soldiers benefit from cohesion and morale in peacekeeping missions as much as, or perhaps more than, in traditional combat. Because the job may involve a lack of meaningful or challenging work, isolation, boredom, frustration, and even disempowerment (Bartone, Adler, & Vaitkus, 1998), peacekeeping roles can be at odds with a soldier's views of combat and combat roles (Litz, 1996). These conflicts may call into question a soldier's sense of purpose as well as the perception that he or she is making a contribution to an important unit. Strong cohesion and morale may be required to perform peacekeeping duties and to cope effectively with the unique psychological demands of peacekeeping, such as helplessness and powerlessness in the face of ongoing threats and human suffering (e.g., Litz, Bolton, & Gray, 2003).

Another challenge faced by peacekeepers is stressful and hazardous conditions, which create a small but salient risk for enduring psychological problems at redeployment and beyond (e.g., Litz, Orsillo, Friedman, Ehlick, & Bates, 1997). The risk of potential harm to self and others, combined with other stressful and possibly conflicting peacekeeping demands, creates an even greater need for effective group functioning and support. In addition, unlike combat missions, peacekeeping roles are typically not well understood by family, friends, and the nation, potential sources of support that would otherwise buffer the demands and sacrifices of military service (Bolton, Litz, Britt, Adler, & Roemer, 2001).

The various stressors and demands of peacekeeping place soldiers at risk for a number of strains, including decreased enthusiasm and drive (i.e., poor morale) and mental health problems (e.g., posttraumatic stress disorder [PTSD]; Litz & Bolton, 2000). Because not everyone exposed to significant peacekeeping stressors develops noteworthy strain, it is important to identify risk and resilience mechanisms that help protect soldiers against adversity. In this context, the ultimate goal is to reduce strain, such as low morale in peacekeepers, by promoting resilience and intervening effectively for those most at risk for mission and postmission strain.

In studies of U.S. military peacekeepers, cohesion and generalized pride about service in the military were among the strongest predictors of mental health functioning 3 months postdeployment (Orsillo, Roemer, Litz, Ehlich, & Friedman, 1998). Similarly, Litz et al. (1997) found that positive aspects

of military service, such as perceptions of esprit de corps and cohesion, and support from family and the military were negatively associated with PTSD symptom severity following the peace enforcement operation in Somalia.

In this study, we sought to extend and replicate our prior research by further elucidating the factors that are associated with morale and cohesion in peacekeepers who were deployed to Kosovo. We examined morale and cohesion *prospectively*—prior to deployment and at redeployment. We report the predictors of morale at these two time points separately because research has shown that sources of morale can vary over time (Bartone et al., 1998). Furthermore, while morale may have similar determinants across military units and missions, situational characteristics appear to play a role (e.g., Gal & Manning 1987). As a result, at predeployment, we evaluated prior history of stress exposure and premission stressors (e.g., concurrent family difficulties) as potential predictors, while at postdeployment we focus mainly on peacekeeping stressors. The prospective nature of this study allowed us to examine the predictors of postmission morale, controlling for predeployment morale, and the impact of morale secondary to peacekeeping stressors; we also examine the influence of unit cohesion at both time points. We hypothesized that predeployment stressors and perceptions of unit cohesion would be associated with premission morale and that morale at postdeployment would be predicted by predeployment morale, unit cohesion, and level of mission stressors. We also examined changes in morale and cohesion over time. We hypothesized that both would increase over time as soldiers get to know one another and function better as a unit.

We also explored the impact of beliefs about patriotism and nationalism on morale. *Patriotism* is defined as a set of beliefs that shape both individual and collective identity and behavior, which can profoundly affect a variety of intragroup and intergroup processes (e.g., Bar-Tal & Staub, 1997). We argue that beliefs about patriotism, and the role of the United States in world affairs, might sustain soldiers' morale in peacekeeping missions, even when national recognition and support for the mission is low. Coherent and salient positive beliefs about the role of the United States in international affairs might provide soldiers with a sense of purpose and pride about their role, even in the face of adversity and conflict in the peacekeeping context. Bar-Tal (1993) argued that patriotism binds group members to the group as a whole and can result in genuine attachment of individuals to their group. If soldiers feel that they are doing the right thing and that they are instruments of what they perceive as a just and valid policy, their motivation and confidence may remain high. Alternatively, soldiers who are relatively low or inconsistent with respect to patriotic and nationalistic beliefs may report greater distress and conflict about peacekeeping roles and thus be at greater risk for enduring strain. We also examined changes

in patriotism and nationalism from pre- to postdeployment, hypothesizing an increase in these attitudes due to the successful nature of the mission.

Method

Participants

Active-duty military personnel stationed at Fort Stewart, Georgia, were asked to complete a survey in August 2000, approximately 2 to 3 weeks prior to their deployment to Kosovo. Soldiers were informed that participation was completely voluntary, and 1,132 soldiers agreed to participate. This was a convenience sample in that all soldiers who were present for duty were asked to participate, but there is no information on the rate of refusal. Of those initially surveyed, 324 soldiers agreed to participate in a follow-up assessment and provided contact information, which allowed us to locate them once they returned from Kosovo. We were able to contact 203 of these soldiers by mail or phone for a postdeployment interview an average of 7 months after they returned from Kosovo.

Procedure

Soldiers deployed for the peacekeeping mission in Kosovo were recruited to participate in this study while completing their deployment paperwork at Fort Stewart, Georgia. The lieutenant in charge of their unit first told soldiers about the study, and instructions were provided. Soldiers filled out the survey in a large auditorium under standardized conditions with a research coordinator present to provide instructions and answer questions. The questionnaire took about 45 min to complete, and soldiers were asked to indicate whether they would be willing to be contacted postdeployment in order to complete a follow-up survey. Well-trained interviewers from a national survey research organization conducted follow-up surveys by phone, which took 30 to 45 min to complete. Individuals who could not be contacted by phone, but for whom current addresses were available, were sent the survey via the mail.

Measures

Soldiers completed questionnaires at both predeployment and postdeployment. Below we list each measure and specify at which time point it was completed.

Demographics questionnaire. At predeployment, soldiers were asked to indicate their age, gender, marital status, education, rank, and number of prior deployments.

Morale. At predeployment and postdeployment, participants were asked to rate their general morale and morale in their units on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*very low*) to 4 (*very high*). This measure was adapted from the Combat Readiness Morale Questionnaire, widely used in the Israeli army and also adapted for use with U.S. troops (Gal & Manning, 1987). The two items were correlated .54 ($p < .01$) at predeployment and .55 ($p < .01$) at postdeployment.

Cohesion. Participants were asked to rate the cohesion in their units on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*very low*) to 4 (*very high*) at predeployment and postdeployment.

Current stressors. At predeployment, soldiers were asked to rate the level of trouble or concern caused in the preceding 6 months by 23 items on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*does not apply*) to 5 (*very high*). Potential stressors included items such as financial problems, health difficulties, family problems, and employment difficulties. The alpha reliability for this scale was .87.

The Life Events Checklist. The Life Events Checklist (LEC) was developed concurrently with the Clinician Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS) and was designed to be administered prior to administration of the CAPS in order to screen for potentially traumatizing events (PTEs) that respondents may have experienced. It consists of 16 items inquiring about the experience of PTEs known to result in PTSD or other posttraumatic difficulties (e.g., "serious accident of any kind," "sexual assault," and "sudden, violent death"). For each LEC item, a score of 1 was assigned only if the respondent reported directly experiencing an event, and a 0 was assigned if any other response option was endorsed. A recent study found that the LEC exhibits excellent test–retest reliability and good convergence with existing measures of trauma history (Gray, Litz, Wang, & Lombardo, 2004). In a clinical sample of combat veterans, the LEC was significantly correlated with measures of psychological distress and was more strongly predictive of PTSD symptoms than was a measure of combat exposure (Gray et al., 2004). The LEC was administered at predeployment.

Patriotism and Nationalism scale. The Patriotism and Nationalism Scale consists of 120 items and loads onto six factors. A shortened, 20-item version of the scale was used for the purposes of this study at predeployment and postdeployment, combining the first two factors of the scale (i.e., patriotism and nationalism). Soldiers were asked to rate a series of patriotic statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Examples include "I am proud to be an American," "The fact that I am an American is an important part of my identity," and "The first duty of every young American is to honor national American history and heritage." This scale has been found to have good reliability

and validity (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989). The alpha reliability of this measure with the current sample was .85 at predeployment and .83 at postdeployment.

Exposure and appraisal of peacekeeping experiences. Appraisals of the potentially negative and positive aspects of participation in the mission were assessed using a number of scales that were rationally derived based upon our previous work evaluating peacekeeping-related stress (e.g., Litz et al., 1997). Items were constructed to fit into the following four appraisal and exposure categories:

1. *General Overseas Military Stressors (GOMS).* This 8-item measure was used to evaluate generic, low-magnitude stressors that soldiers are exposed to in any overseas military deployment (e.g., "being separated from family and friends" and "having little privacy and personal space"). The internal consistency of this scale was .78. For each of the items, participants were asked to rate the degree to which the experience had a negative impact on them personally; response options ranged from 1 (*no negative impact*) to 4 (*extremely negative impact*).

2. *Negative Aspects of Peacekeeping Scale (NAPS).* This scale was composed of 17 items that measured the extent to which participants found peacekeeping duties and issues related to the mission in Kosovo difficult or frustrating on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*no negative impact*) to 4 (*extremely negative impact*); for example, "being unable to identify a clear enemy" and "seeing children who were victims of war." The internal consistency of this scale was .88.

3. *Positive Military Experiences Scale (PMES).* This 11-item scale, used in our previous study of peacekeeping in Somalia (Litz et al., 1997), assessed the general positive aspects of service in a peacekeeping operation (e.g., "being in the Balkans for a good cause," "feeling supported by fellow soldiers," and "feeling that your mission was successful"). For each of the items, participants were asked to rate the degree to which the experience had a positive impact on them personally. Response options ranged from 1 (*no positive impact*) to 4 (*extremely positive impact*). Internal consistency was .87 for this measure.

4. *Potentially Traumatizing Events (PTE) Scale.* This 21-item scale is derived, in part, from the Combat Exposure Scale (Keane et al., 1989), which is a measure of the frequency of exposure to warzone-related stressors. Our research team derived additional items

that roughly fit the characterization of a Criterion A event for PTSD as described in DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). The scale required participants to rate how negative their emotional reactions were concerning various experiences, which were likely to produce fear, helplessness, or horror while they were in Kosovo, on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*does not apply to me*) to 4 (*extremely negative impact*); for example, "patrolling areas where there were mines" and "fear of having your unit fired on." The internal consistency of this scale was .92.

Results

Follow-Up Group Comparison

We compared those soldiers who completed the postdeployment survey ($n = 203$) to those who were not followed up on ($n = 929$) on various demographic and military characteristics. Soldiers who completed the postdeployment survey differed significantly on a number of background variables compared to those who were not followed up on. Those soldiers who completed the postdeployment survey tended to be slightly older ($M = 28.30$, $SD = 6.56$ vs. $M = 26.31$, $SD = 6.27$; $T = 4.04$, $p < .01$), married (62% married vs. 38% not married; $\chi^2 = 12.00$, $p < .01$), slightly more educated ($T = 2.28$, $p < .05$), and somewhat higher in rank ($T = 4.01$, $p < .05$). However, there were no statistically significant group differences in regard to gender and the number of previous deployments.

Data Analysis Plan

We examined variables that predicted morale at predeployment and postdeployment, since differing stressors affect morale as missions progress from staging to redeployment (e.g., Bartone et al., 1998). We also examined the changes in morale, cohesion, and patriotism and nationalism ratings over time. Statistical analyses were conducted with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 11.0 for Windows.

Before running the regression models predicting morale, the zero-order correlations between a number of demographic and military variables and pre- and postdeployment morale were examined. The demographic and military variables included age, gender, marital status, education, rank, and number of prior deployments. If a correlation was significant, that demographic or military variable was included in the regression equation. Only age and rank were significantly correlated with morale at predeployment. Older individuals reported higher morale scores ($r = .19$, $p < .01$), as did individuals with higher rank ($r = .17$, $p < .05$). At postdeployment, age

Table 1

Correlations Among Variables in Regression Models

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Age	—													
2. Rank	.505**	—												
3. Past deployment	.452**	.287**	—											
4. GLS	-.072	-.167**	-.065	—										
5. LEC	.047	-.126	-.002	.165*	—									
6. PMES (post)	.085	.053	.080	-.048	.047	—								
7. NAPS (post)	.000	-.150*	-.055	.174*	.002	.145*	—							
8. GOMS (post)	-.113	-.125	-.228**	.229*	.013	-.095	.494**	—						
9. PTEs (post)	.071	-.133	.028	.123	.035	.184*	.559**	.141*	—					
10. P/N (pre)	.301**	.238**	.182**	-.137	.046	.087	.087	-.060	.092	—				

Table 1. Continued

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
11. P/N (post)	.167*	.051	.113	-.095	.034	.215**	.062	-.069	.042	.564**	—			
12. Cohesion (pre)	.099	.263**	.086	-.429**	-.086	.074	-.031	-.209**	-.012	.331**	.210**	—		
13. Cohesion (post)	.136	.184*	.075	-.221***	.090	.224**	-.044	-.207***	.007	.266***	.075	.401*	—	
14. Morale (pre)	.190**	.255***	.090	-.507***	-.109	.192***	-.071	-.180*	.002	.347***	.246**	.707**	.404**	—
15. Morale (post)	.255***	.222***	.238***	-.134	.014	.370***	-.089	-.384***	.043	.251***	.221***	.369**	.528**	.385**

Note. GLS = General Life Stressors; LEC = Life events checklist; PMES = positive military experiences scale; NAPS = negative aspects of peacekeeping scale; GOMS = general overseas military stressors; PTEs = potentially traumatizing events experienced while in Kosovo; P/N = Patriotism and Nationalism.
* $p < .05$, two-tailed. ** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

($r = .26$, $p < .01$), rank ($r = .15$, $p < .05$), and number of past deployments ($r = .24$, $p < .01$) were significantly correlated with morale, with higher number of prior deployments associated with greater morale.

Comparing Morale Pre- and Postdeployment

In order to determine whether there were changes in levels of morale, a paired-samples t-test was performed. Results indicated that morale at postdeployment ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 1.64$) was significantly higher than morale at predeployment ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.79$; $t = 5.82$, $p < .01$).

Comparing Cohesion Pre- and Postdeployment

In order to determine whether there were changes in levels of cohesion, a paired-samples t-test was performed. Results indicated that cohesion at postdeployment ($M = 2.50$, $SD = .95$) was significantly higher than cohesion at predeployment ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 1.00$; $t = 6.64$, $p < .01$).

Comparing Patriotism and Nationalism Pre- and Postdeployment

In order to determine whether there were changes in levels of patriotism and nationalism, a paired-samples t-test was performed. Results indicated that patriotism and nationalism at postdeployment ($M = 81.59$, $SD = .95$) was significantly higher than patriotism and nationalism at predeployment ($M = 75.73$, $SD = 13.10$; $t = 7.54$, $p < .01$).

Statistical Predictors of Predeployment Morale

In the hierarchical regression model predicting predeployment morale (see Table 2), demographic and military characteristics were first entered in Step 1 to partial out the variance attributable to these background variables. Next, both current general life stressors and past potentially traumatic stressors (i.e., LEC) were entered in Step 2. Finally, morale and soldiers' self-ratings of their patriotism and nationalism were entered in the last step.

The final model accounted for 59% of the variance in predeployment morale. After demographic and military characteristics were controlled for, current general life stressors, unit cohesion, and ratings of patriotism and nationalism emerged as significant predictors of predeployment morale.

Statistical Predictors of Postdeployment Morale

In the hierarchical regression model predicting postdeployment morale (see Table 3), demographic and military characteristics were first entered in

Table 2

Hierarchical Regression of Variables Predicting Morale at Predeployment

Variable	β	T	R^2	R^2 Change
Step 1			.06**	
Age	.07	.83		
Rank	.20*	2.31		
Step 2			.31**	.25**
Age	.09	1.23		
Rank	.09	1.21		
General Life Stressors	-.49**	-7.55		
Life Events Checklist	-.06	-.92		
Step 3			.59**	.29**
Age	.07	1.17		
Rank	-.02	-.40		
General Life Stressors	-.25**	-4.44		
Life Events Checklist	-.05	-.99		
Unit cohesion	.57**	9.65		
Patriotism and nationalism	.12*	2.19		

Note. Model statistics for the predeployment morale index equation are $F(6, 175) = 41.21, p < .01$. Rank was measured as follows: 1 = junior enlisted (E1 to E4); 2 = noncommissioned officers (E5 to E9); 3 = officers (O1 and higher and warrant officers). Sample size may vary slightly due to missing data.
*$p < .05.$ **$p < .01.$

Step 1, once again to partial out the variance attributable to these background variables. In addition, given the prospective nature of our study, we were able to control for predeployment morale, predeployment cohesion, and predeployment patriotism/nationalism, which were also entered in Step 1. Next, in Step 2, four appraisal and exposure variables (i.e., PMES, GOMS, NAPS, and PTEs) and patriotism/nationalism were entered. Unit cohesion was entered in the final step to determine whether it significantly predicted postdeployment morale above and beyond the other variables.

The final model accounted for 44% of the variance in postdeployment morale. After controlling for demographic and military characteristics as well as predeployment morale, cohesion, and patriotism/nationalism, we found that positive military experiences, general overseas military stressors, and unit cohesion were significant predictors of postdeployment morale.

Table 3

Hierarchical Regression of Appraisals of Peacekeeping Experiences Predicting Postdeployment Morale

Variable	β	T	R^2	R^2 Change
Step 1			.19**	
Age	.08	.92		
Rank	.03	.40		
Past deployments	.15	1.90		
Predeployment morale	.17	1.70		
Predeployment unit cohesion	.21*	2.08		
Predeployment patriotism and nationalism	-.02	-.22		
Step 2			.35**	.16**
Age	.06	.72		
Rank	.05	.68		
Past deployments	.08	1.09		
Predeployment morale	.09	1.00		
Predeployment unit cohesion	.16	1.76		
Predeployment patriotism and nationalism	.05	.57		
Positive Military Experiences	.32**	4.70		
General Overseas Military Stressors	-.28**	-3.49		
Negative Aspects of Peacekeeping	.04	.56		
Potentially Traumatizing Events	-.03	-.33		
Patriotism and nationalism	-.04	-.48		
Step 3			.44**	.09**
Age	.07	.91		
Rank	.04	.51		
Past deployment	.09	1.28		
Predeployment morale	.04	.41		
Predeployment unit cohesion	.08	.92		
Predeployment patriotism and nationalism	.03	.42		
Positive Military Experiences	.26**	3.92		

Table 3. Continued

Variable	β	T	R^2	R^2 Change
General Overseas Military Stressors	-.26**	-3.49		
Negative Aspects of Peacekeeping	.06	.66		
Potentially Traumatizing Events	-.04	-.49		
Patriotism and nationalism	-.03	-.41		
Unit cohesion	.33**	4.80		

Note. Model statistics for the postdeployment morale index equation are $F(12, 171) = 10.25, p < .01$. Rank was measured as follows: 1 = junior enlisted (E1 to E4); 2 = noncommissioned officers (E5 to E9); 3 = officers (O1 and higher and warrant Officers).
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Discussion

We examined the predictors of pre- and postdeployment morale in U.S. peacekeepers deployed to Kosovo. The results suggest that morale is determined by complex factors that unfold over the course of a peacekeeping mission.

At predeployment, after controlling for age, rank, and past trauma, current life demands and unit cohesion were the most robust predictors of morale. This suggests that soldiers who experience group unity prior to a potentially stressful peacekeeping deployment are those that may have a higher military-related enthusiasm and drive. Conversely, those who may have a difficult time benefiting from or contributing to group processes that promote cohesion at predeployment may struggle with establishing the ingredients that are necessary for an individualized (and, perhaps, collective) sense of motivation for military roles and duties. Furthermore, soldiers who are burdened with lingering demands resulting from roles outside the military (e.g., marital conflict, financial problems) also report decreased morale. This suggests that current life stress may dampen subjective well-being and motivation related to military service. This could be due to a variety of factors, each of which will require future research to verify; for example, soldiers' coping resources and attention may be consumed by extramilitary demands, making it difficult to absorb unifying and positive group activities and messages, and soldiers in the group (e.g., squad, platoon) may have difficulty empathizing with and supporting soldiers whose attention is outside of the group. Finally, to a lesser degree, patriotism and nationalism were uniquely related to morale at predeployment. Thus, to some extent, attitudes about the United States and the role of the United States in

international affairs affect morale. These factors may be uniquely important in peacekeeping operations, which are controversial and not universally supported by civilians, politicians, and arguably, the military command.

Even after controlling for a host of pre- and postdeployment variables, unit cohesion was the strongest predictor of morale at postdeployment, cross-validating the predeployment finding. This suggests that a sense of belonging to the group and support by the group is a stable predictor of drive during a stressful mission. Ratings of morale prior to deployment did not significantly predict morale at postdeployment, which suggests that morale is less a trait than a fluid characteristic of individuals within groups that may be dependent on a variety of environmental conditions and group attributes (Bartone et al., 1998). Positive military experiences (e.g., feeling good about humanitarian roles) and general overseas mission stressors (e.g., missing loved ones) predicted morale at postdeployment, after controlling for several predeployment variables. Positive military experiences may enhance soldiers' self-efficacy and affirmative constructions about a mission and foster optimistic feelings about the role of the United States as a peacekeeping nation. These experiences, in turn, may increase morale, or morale and subjective appraisal of positive peacekeeping experiences may be co-determined by a number of factors (e.g., positive affectivity). Appraisals of general military stressors, such as the malevolent environment in overseas missions, have been shown to have a direct association with chronic operational strain and posttraumatic stress (e.g., King, King, Foy, & Gudanowski, 1996; King, King, Gudanowski, & Vreven, 1995). One possible reason for the unique negative association with morale could be that predeployment demands lingered for some soldiers, negatively affecting morale postdeployment in the same manner. This underscores the need to carefully examine the effects of nonmilitary stressors that may impact morale negatively. Finally, despite predicting predeployment morale, beliefs about patriotism and nationalism did not significantly predict morale at post deployment. It could be that as mission demands become a reality, group cohesion is a more central determinant of strained morale.

It is of note that cohesion and morale increased overall from predeployment to postdeployment. This could be due to relatively low exposure to potentially traumatizing events during the Kosovo mission. Perhaps for many soldiers, negative expectations of the mission were not realized. Alternatively, it could be a generalized phenomenon reflecting better living conditions and reestablishment of garrison routines and training, and overall perceptions of the mission as successful. The latter explanation is supported by greater reports of patriotism and nationalism.

This study has several limitations that should be noted. First, our measures of morale and cohesion were short and somewhat limited in scope.

Future studies should employ more elaborate multidimensional indicators of the morale and cohesion constructs. We need parametric studies that can shed light on the psychological and social mechanisms that promote or detract from cohesive group functioning in the military. It will also be important to examine individual differences that moderate the impact of group cohesion, especially pertaining to mission-related demands. On a different level, it may prove useful to study how cohesion is systematically fostered in military training. What are the essential ingredients? Is anything missing? Can the literature on group processes and leadership inform practice?

Future examinations of cohesion and morale should evaluate a multitrait, multimethod matrix of social and interpersonal characteristics that promote social supports under stressful conditions in the military. This would include direct observation, other-soldier ratings, officer ratings, behavioral indicators of group cohesion, and evaluation of personality traits (e.g., extroversion). For example, because we only evaluated cohesion and morale rated by individuals, this leaves open the possibility that grouped data would reveal different patterns of associations, given the impact of these variables on the group (e.g., Griffith, 2002). In addition, in order to establish directionality between cohesion and indicators of strain, it will be essential to conduct multiwave longitudinal research. Future studies should also explore the role of cohesion as a mediator between stressor (e.g., general military stressors) and strain variables with larger samples, ideally employing structural equation modeling to test these relationships.

Given that we employed a sample of convenience, soldiers who were surveyed may not be representative of all soldiers deployed to Kosovo. Furthermore, there were several differences between soldiers who agreed to be followed up on and those who did not, and as a result, the external validity of this study may be limited. Only a relatively small percentage of soldiers who were surveyed at predeployment agreed to be contacted post-deployment. It may be that soldiers who were not followed up on are invested in their privacy, may feel greater stigma, are less motivated to share their experiences, and may have had generally more negative experiences. Also, many who agreed to be contacted could not be followed up on for logistical reasons such as relocation.

Methodological limitations notwithstanding, this research suggests the need to broaden our understanding of the factors that may assist and motivate soldiers during demanding peacekeeping operations and the factors that may mitigate the impact of stressful demands and associated mission-related strain. Similar to those of previous studies, our findings indicate that cohesion and morale are, for the most part, fluctuating characteristics, although unit cohesion was the best predictor of morale both before and after

the mission. Furthermore, attitudes about group processes were affected to some extent by pre- and postmission factors.

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